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IDEALISM AND EPISTEMOLOGY.

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IT can scarcely be maintained that the prevailing characteristic of recent English speculation is its "Cheap and Easy Monism". The 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians' who are always referred to as deepest in this error (though they are not identified by their critics) are less in evidence than the Lotzians and Neo-Lotzians. And these latter are anything rather than Monists. Monism, if we may judge by them, is giving way to more or less thinly disguised Dualisms, or even Pluralisms; and philosophy is putting on motley. The tendency of 'the young bloods,' if I may quote the phrase of a young philosopher, is critical rather than constructive. They evolve no systems. They suggest that system-making is not consistent with sobriety of thought, and they confine themselves to analysis, the exposition of difficulties and polemic. They will admit, I do not doubt, that "the desire to comprehend the Universe as a revelation of a single principle is the genuine impulse of philosophy". But, so far as I can see, they do not give way to any such impulse. The speculative duty of the day seems to them to be that of dividing Philosophy into special departments. Besides Psychology, which is manifestly a special science, there are other disciplines different from each other but falling within Philosophy. Before we can attempt to construct a Metaphysic there are

"manifestly preliminary" problems to be solved. We must *first* have Psychology to deal with the inside of the individual's consciousness; then Epistemology to deal with the relation of the inside and the outside; then Ontology to deal with the nature of what is both inside and outside; and, I presume, Logic to deal with the processes of that 'hypothetical' existence, 'thought in general'. There may, indeed, be some way of bringing these departments of philosophy together, either under one of their own number, or under some fifth. But, as yet, that way has not been revealed to us. For the time being it has seemed sufficient to the new school of critics to expose the difficulties and errors which have sprung from the confusion of the categories and problems of these different and distinct disciplines by the 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians'.

Now this critical endeavour is capable of being very useful labour, although a mere *distinguo* solves no problem. And the most faithful adherent of Idealism may well admit that no philosophic system stands in greater need of articulation. He would also fain believe that no system would gain so much by that process. A fresh application of its main principles to new data would not only enrich and substantiate but also modify them, and lead the way to a more complete and true view of the world. But criticism, if it is to claim the attention of philosophers, must itself be philosophical, that is, it must itself derive its impulse and guidance from some intelligible single principle. The difficulties urged against a philosophy should have some higher source than the commonplace empiricism of ordinary consciousness. The duty to criticise must be based on a right to criticise, and that right can only be derived from some consecutive and ultimately constructive theory of existence. I do not wish to imply that ordinary experience and the ruling convictions of unsophisticated mankind have no claim upon the philosopher's adherence; nor even to deny that philosophy may find its whole task in the systematic reconstruction of ordinary experience. But it is one thing to pay regard to the facts of such experience, and quite another thing to regard its own theories of these facts as the touchstone of philosophic truth. Philosophy is bracing itself to its most difficult and most productive task in attempting the former; it is denying its own right to exist in adopting the latter. Why should it toil if there lies ready to hand the cheapest and easiest of all methods, namely, that of simply accepting and re-wording the unconscious theories of traditional opinion?

Now, so long as the critics of Idealism produce no evidence that their criticism is itself construction disguised, they are liable to the charge of this lower appeal to 'common-sense'. Their recoil against Monism may seem to be a recoil against philosophical method; and, in the words of a recent writer, "their sympathy with the German reaction" may appear merely to "restore the rule of traditions which we are just beginning to lay aside". No doubt they cut themselves free from such uncritical traditions by claiming to rest their polemic on the basis of the Idealism which they examine. They profess an Ontology that is all-comprehensive. They will even admit, *at times*, as Lotze does, that the Supreme Subject, which used to be called the Absolute, is "the only reality". But their Ontology is, so far, a name and nothing more; and their supreme "Subject" is only an Honorary President who hypothetically acquiesces in the activities of his subordinate 'manifestations'. In virtue of that office the Subject holds things together somehow or other, and even unites thought and being. Professor Seth assures us that "the chasm" (*i.e.*, between ^{inward} thought and reality) "is not an absolute one, otherwise knowledge would be for ever impossible". And, in my opinion, this is self-evident. But in the previous sentence he tells us that "Ontologically, or as a matter of existence, they remain distinct—the one here and the other there—and nothing avails to bridge the chasm". And these two consecutive sentences, if we are not to forget one in reading the other, leave the relation between knowledge and reality in a very obscure state. The relation exists, but it is not ontological. Knowledge, we are told, is entirely within + the subjective consciousness, while reality is not within it; + and yet the former is connected with the latter, though it is not connected really but ideally,—or, shall we say, *unreally*? I think it fair to urge that the unity of knowledge and reality, which prevents "the chasm which nothing can avail to bridge from being 'absolute,'" needs further explanation. But no explanation is given. Attention is concentrated on the opposing terms. We are presented with a series of exclusive alternatives. Feeling is set over against knowledge, simple apprehension against reasoning, the 'given' against our thought, perception against conception, particulars against the universal, the subjective against the 'trans-subjective,' the ego against its experience, consciousness against its phenomena. Idealism, which has sought to bring these differences together as manifestations of a single principle, is regarded as having merely obscured their distinctions. Its obedience to the 'genuine impulse'

of philosophy seems to its critics to have issued only in a theory of the 'altogetherness of everything'. Now, I willingly admit that to obliterate differences is not to explain them. But to insist on differences to the exclusion of their unity is equally futile. And it is obvious that no criticism of idealism can be effective or just if it does not seize upon its 'single principle,' its colligating hypothesis, and show either that that principle is altogether untrue, or that its application to particulars is inadequate. But the critics attempt neither of these tasks. The idealistic Ontology which they profess is quite otiose. They dwell on the various aspects of the opposition of knowledge and reality as if, after the manner of the sceptics, they would fain make it absolute. They save themselves from the sceptical position by occasional hints at a 'faith' which is to do service when reason fails, or at a feeling which is to give evidence of matters of which we cannot be conscious. And in all these respects they seem to me to occupy the attitude of ordinary consciousness, except that critically they are better equipped. In other words, they are more fully conscious of the different aspects of experience which philosophy has to reconcile, if it has any task or function at all, but they make no attempt to effect that reconciliation; they put forward the problem of philosophy in the place of its solution; they criticise Idealism from a dualistic point of view.

It is in this dualistic spirit that they explain Kant, under whose broad ægis every writer on modern philosophy seeks refuge. For they certainly have gone 'back to Kant,' and, I believe, much further, even to Dr. Thomas Reid. They are proceeding to give us 'the authentic Kantian philosophy'; for who cannot find his own creed in Kant? And that 'authentic' or expurgated Kantian philosophy is, as they believe, a philosophy from which the 'many idealisms' could not have sprung except by the confusion of obviously different things, namely, knowledge and things known. Kant, it seems, held that knowledge was all 'inside', that all our perceptions are subjective phenomena and nothing more; and in this respect occupied 'practically the same ground as Berkeley'. He differed from Berkeley mainly in that he did more justice to the *a priori* elements in our purely subjective perceptions, and held consistently to things-in-themselves. This means, if I rightly understand, that Kant opposed ideas and things after the manner of Locke.

The hints given to us of the positive theory which lies behind this criticism of Idealism and this reconstruction of Kant point to the same dualism. That theory is to be a com-

With Locke, ideas are not distinct things, but are things in some other sense, and the individual consciousness is not a separate entity, but is the individual consciousness itself.

bination of Epistemological Realism with Ontological Idealism. It shall show (1) that knowledge is not the reality known; (2) that knowledge is nevertheless *of* reality; (3) that the universe is "essentially related to intelligence" and not "a brute fact existing outside the divine life and its intelligent ends". I am not aware that any idealist would ⁺ be prepared to dispute any one of these conclusions. No 'Hegelian,' 'Neo-Hegelian,' or 'Neo-Kantian' would hold that his ideas are the things which they represent. No one, except an absolute Sceptic, would deny that knowledge is 'of' reality, though every philosopher would like to explain ^x that 'of'. And we are now, thanks mainly to Kant, all convinced that reality is "essentially related to intelligence"; though some of us would like to understand that intelligence and that reality in such a way as to make their relation intelligible. If it is sufficient to occupy these positions one after the other, or combine them externally into an Epistemologico-realistico-ontologico Idealism, then we may all assume, equally with our critics, that proud title.

But philosophy can not be satisfied with 'the cheap and easy method' of solving difficulties by a *distinguo*. It seeks a principle of unity in the differences; and that principle is scarcely brought to the surface by a theory which combines the dogmatism of Reid with the ontology of Hegel; for this seems to be the plain English of Epistemologico-realistico-ontologico Idealism. Dualism, which is philosophic failure, is too thinly disguised by this mixture of such heterogeneous elements as the absolute philosophy and unsophisticated popular opinion. And those who advance it, if they are not, as Mr. Bosanquet says, "fatally deficient in philosophic thoroughness," will be obliged to abandon either the one or the other of these elements. Nor is it difficult to see which element they will have to abandon. They are really objecting to the theory of Hegel from the point of view of Reid. Their Hegelian or idealistic Ontology is, as yet, not operative. Their ^{convictions} are that man's knowledge is not the objects which it represents and that Hegelians say that it is; that books on philosophy, even if that philosophy be absolute, are not the Universe, and that Hegelians say that they are. The fundamental vice of the 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians' is confusion. They have confused many things. They have mistaken a theory of knowledge for a theory of being, the facts of their own consciousness for the real things which they represent; they have identified their own ego with a logical category, and themselves with God. The claim of the critics to a hearing

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rests on their efforts to disentangle these confusions and set the elements apart. But before attempting their tasks the critics may justly be required (1) to be quite sure that Idealists have confused these elements ; (2) to bear in mind that the real task of philosophy begins only with the attempt to bring these elements together again as manifestations of a 'single principle'.

Now, I would be loath to assert that Idealists have at no time given colour to the charge that they have confused the distinction between knowledge and reality in one or other of its various aspects. But I would maintain, at the same time, that the Idealists have not identified their own ideas of things with the things which the ideas mean, or regarded the books of Hegel as the Universe. And I shall try to prove that to insist as *against* Idealism that knowledge is not that which is known springs from a fundamental misapprehension of the idealistic point of view.

I regard Idealism—to put the matter as plainly as I can—as a theory which represents the Universe as a thinking activity, an activity which reaches its highest form in this world in man. The critics accuse Idealists of saying that the Universe consists of *ideas* or thoughts, hanging together in a kind of system. Such a 'world of ideas' they, quite naturally, find to be very unreal, lacking all stability and substantiality—a mere cloudland. It is, they hold, only a subjective world, inside the 'consciousness' of individuals ; and they would, therefore, attach it at both ends to realities—at one end, to individual thinkers who produce thoughts, and, at the other end, to 'trans-subjective' facts which the thoughts represent. They thus get three sciences, or three departments of philosophy, namely, Epistemology to deal with our thoughts 'of' reality, Psychology to deal with the thinkers, and Ontology to deal with the nature of things, including thinkers. In consistency with this view they accuse Hegel and his followers of 'swamping Epistemology in Metaphysics,' as well as of the opposite error of swamping Metaphysics in Logic. This means, I presume, that Hegelians succeed in both making the world of realities swallow the world of ideas, and the world of ideas swallow the world of realities—like the conjurer's two snakes, each of which disappeared inside the other. Or, to speak without the violent metaphors of 'swamping' and 'swallowing,' the opposition of thoughts and things has been obliterated by the Hegelians, old and new ; and their critics are bent on holding the opposites apart, and on giving a theory of each of them and a theory of their relation. This, I believe, is the precise

point on which most of the critics of Idealism base their attack ; and on this rests their own constructive endeavour. In other words, they contend for the need and possibility of a science of the relation between ideas, 'the subjective states, which are plainly our data,' and 'trans-subjective realities,' or the things meant by these ideas.

Now any theory of the relation of these opposed terms implies that both of them exist. The critics thus rest their case on the existence of a world of ideas (or of as many worlds of ideas as there are individual thinkers), and on its difference from and relation to a single world of real objects. The Epistemology which is to clear the way for Metaphysics is to give a systematic account of the relation of these inner and outer worlds ; and the fundamental error of Hegelianism is that it has rushed straight on Metaphysics, without distinguishing the sphere of thoughts from the sphere of things, the categories of Epistemology from those of Metaphysics.

But 'Hegelians' are, in my opinion, exposed to a still more fundamental charge. They not only have no Epistemology, but they deny that such a science is possible. They do not recognise the existence of a sphere of ideas requiring to be related to a sphere of thoughts. And it is evident that before a science of the relation of two worlds, one subjective and the other objective, can be justly demanded from them, they must be convinced that both of these worlds exist. Idealism, as I should like to call the theory of Hegel and his followers, leaves room for Psychology, as it does for Botany or Physics or any other special science that deals, under its own appropriate hypothesis, with definite facts or special elements of the real world of objects. But its own proper task is throughout metaphysical ; it is to investigate the nature of a single real principle and to trace its activity both in outer facts and in thinking individuals. Of a 'world of ideas'—whether in individual thinkers, or hanging in mid-air, so to speak, between individual thinkers and the things they think about—it is obstinately ignorant. And, consequently, they do not oppose the world of ideas 'with its imperturbable repose and clearness,' as Lotze says, to the world of things with its innumerable activities. The opposition is to them meaningless. They cannot confuse therefore its terms, nor feel the need of an Epistemology to expound their relation.

The first task of the critics of Idealism is, therefore, to prove that a 'world of ideas' exists, either in thinkers or between them and the world they know. But of this I have seen no proof ; and I think that no proof is possible. So far as

my experience goes—and these critics of Idealism lay great store on the experience of any individual—ideas form no world, but each of them exists as long as it is being produced, and no longer. They are evanescent products of an intelligent activity which vanish when the process that brings them forth stops. It is not Idealism but Associationism that regards ideas as capable of hanging on to one another like a swarm of bees, or of arranging themselves in a system ‘imperturbable in its repose’. And it is not Idealism but Associationism that can demand and seek to establish a science to relate these (subjective systems of) ideas to the outer world. One might expect that Mr. Bradley’s criticism of this view had given it its final quietus, but a little experience of philosophers should cure the youthful error of being sanguine. May I repeat, then, that ideas seem to me to occur in sequence; that they follow one another, so far as they are distinct presentations, in a serial order; that not one of them persists in existence; that having once perished it is never revived; and that, for each and all of these reasons, a world of ideas ‘imperturbable in its repose’ is impossible?

This is a very simple matter, it seems to me, but the consequences of ignoring it are so numerous and important that I am tempted to dwell a little upon it. These consequences may be more fully realised if we consider a possible and even probable objection to our view. We speak of an inheritance of knowledge capable of being hoarded by one generation and handed down to its successors. And surely, it may be urged, there are systems of knowledge, symbolised in books and otherwise, which have a universal meaning and a permanent value for mankind. Such bodies of knowledge are to be confounded neither with the fleeting psychical presentations in the minds of their authors, nor with the realities which they represent. The ideas of Plato and Newton, in the sense of their psychological presentations, perished as they arose, one after the other. They were never in the minds of their authors, all at once. They are now all perished with their authors. Nevertheless, it seems little less than wilful perversity to deny that these men left behind them in their works systems of knowledge,—what are not inappropriately called ‘worlds of ideas’ as an inheritance for all thinkers. Is it not undeniable that of certain parts of the earth we obtain information only from books of Geography; that there are ideas in those books for all who can understand them; and that these ideas are neither the psychological presentations in the minds of the writers of those books nor

the actual parts of the earth? Ideas, then, it may be urged, perish as psychical events, but as having meaning they are capable of being permanent and of forming systems.

This distinction is also applicable to the ideas of an individual. We speak of the growth of a man's knowledge, a growth which implies both the accumulation and systematisation of his ideas. And, apparently, we can be as sure that this growth takes place as we can of any other fact of experience. Such knowledge can not be identified with the evanescent psychical events in his consciousness; for these latter are serial and fleeting, and can, therefore, be neither accumulated nor systematised. To confuse this distinction is to confuse an idea as a psychological datum, which is as subjective, incommunicable and transient as the pain of toothache is, with an idea as having objective, and therefore universal and permanent meaning.

Now, it may be urged, while it is evident that Epistemology as a science of subjective phenomena is impossible, Epistemology as a science which explains the objective reference or universal meaning of these ideas may be both possible and necessary. But it is in the latter sense *only* that the critics of Idealism regard Epistemology. Ideas as subjective phenomena are, in their view, to be dealt with by Psychology. They belong exclusively to the private history of the individual. But ideas as having objective reference, a meaning for all minds capable of apprehending them, form the subject-matter of Epistemology. The spheres of these sciences are quite distinct from each other and from that of Ontology. The scientific law, *e.g.*, that the attraction of bodies for one another varies inversely with the square of their distances, is as distinct from the psychological occurrence in the consciousness of its dead discoverer as it is from the actual attraction itself. And, in so far as this law is part of a connected whole of meaning which we call the Copernican System of Astronomy, the term 'world of knowledge' sufficiently describes an actual fact. In that case Epistemology has a distinct field of inquiry, and the 'Hegelians' and 'Neo-Hegelians' cannot, without detriment to clear thinking, 'swamp it' in Metaphysics.

Our Epistemological critics would, no doubt, put their objection more forcibly. I have done what I could, and I now proceed to examine it.

The distinction between ideas as mere occurrences in consciousness and ideas as having objective reference seems to me quite valid. Mr. Bradley has succeeded in putting this matter beyond reasonable dispute. The question that

remains is, does this distinction justify the view that there exists, besides subjects and objects, a world of knowledge awaiting explanation at the hands of a science which is neither Psychology nor Metaphysics, but is, apparently, subsequent to the former, and certainly preliminary to the latter? Does there exist such a third sphere, or does it not rather consist of hypostasised abstractions? There are evidently thinkers and objects thought about; are there other 'existential realities'—to use a phrase of our critics?

I do not think that there are. Ideas are not 'existential realities' in any sense, whether as psychological phenomena or as having objective reference. They are not divisible into two parts, one of which perishes, while the other has permanent existence. The objective reference is an essential characteristic of *every* idea as a phenomenon of consciousness and inseparable from it. The fact that we can and should distinguish these two *aspects* of ideas does not justify us in separating them, in making one fleeting and subjective and the other permanent and objective. Nor can we make ideas the subject of different sciences, except by a process of abstraction that becomes vicious if taken as ultimate. Prof. Seth tells us that "the psychologist deals with psychical events merely as such". "It is only for the psychologist that mental states are interesting on their own account, as subjective realities or facts. To every one else they are interesting only for what they *mean*, for the knowledge they give us of a world beyond themselves." . . . "We treat them consistently as significant, as ideas of something, as representative or symbolic of a world of facts. Now it is from this latter point of view that epistemology considers ideas." (*The Philosophical Review*, vol. i. pp. 131, 132.) But it seems to me that psychology cannot deal with ideas 'merely as psychical events'. Apart from their objective reference, which Prof. Seth hands over to Epistemology, the psychologist could not recognise them as ideas. If he could, every idea would be the same as every other; perceptions, imaginations, memories, concepts, reasonings, as mere psychical events would be indistinguishable. In omitting the objective reference the psychologist would be endeavouring to deal with form without content, and the whole task of his science would be to mark the time of psychical occurrences, none of them having any character. His Epistemology would "swamp" his Psychology. But, again, such an Epistemologist as Prof. Seth describes would be equally helpless. For it is evident that he could find no ideas having objective reference except those which are also phenomena

of the individual consciousness. Or does Prof. Seth know of a world of thoughts without a thinker? If not, then his Epistemologist must take account of the fact that the ideas whose reference he would expound are psychical phenomena and nothing more; though, if they are ideas, they are psychical phenomena which have and must have objective meaning. In this respect Psychology would justly 'swamp' his Epistemology.

What, then, is to be said of such systems of thought as the ideal theory of Plato, or the astronomical theory of Copernicus or Newton? Simply, I would answer, that as knowledge or ideas they are psychical experiences of individuals, fleeting and subjective; and as having permanent meaning for mankind they are not ideas nor knowledge, but objective facts consisting of symbols, and capable of being interpreted into knowledge, or ideas, by the activity of individual minds. In this last respect they fall entirely into the world of external objects, and they are permanent objects of knowledge for exactly the same reasons as works of art, or plants and planets, are permanent objects of knowledge. They are related to intelligence and await its interpretation in precisely the same way. They are natural objects in the outer world, presented to intelligence in the same way as all other objects which have meaning. They occupy no sphere by themselves. They do not constitute a 'world of ideas' from which we must in some inexplicable way escape in order to find realities corresponding to them. They do not, therefore, await interpretation at the hands of a special discipline called Epistemology, but are objective facts whose ultimate nature is to be explained by Ontology. In themselves they are not knowledge. When intelligence interprets them, not before and not after, they may in a sense be called systems of ideas. But so may plants and stars.

Of course these systems of knowledge as outwardly symbolised, which is the *only* way in which they can be regarded as 'existential realities,' form a special class of outer objects. In their case some form of matter—whether it be ink and paper as in books, or stones as in sculpture or architecture, or sounds and movements as in human speech—becomes informed with meaning which is foreign and accidental to it. The objective fact in these cases is a sign or symbol, that is, something whose essence is its meaning and whose *special* material form is more or less extraneous and contingent. But I do not think that this distinction is relevant here. Language, whether written or spoken, is not an outward fact of the same kind as the natural events

whose meaning it is used to convey. Still it is an outward fact, and it is ultimately to be explained in the same way as other outward facts. And it is only as outward objects, capable of being interpreted, that systems of knowledge have any permanence and can be inherited from one generation by another. By the help of language, a system of objective signs, we inherit them from our predecessors just as we inherit their works of art, public buildings, canals, and coal mines. What is handed down from age to age and accumulated is not knowledge but the means of knowledge; not ideas but objects which have meaning. That meaning must be elicited anew by every generation for itself. It is only when so elicited that there is knowledge, as we have consciousness of beauty when we appreciate a work of art, or a scientific law when we understand a physical fact or event.

It is equally manifest that there is no accumulation of knowledge in the individual. There are no ideas except those which occur serially. Each of these ideas is a transient psychical phenomenon which has more or less significance, according as it is a more or less complex unity of multiple elements. Being transient, ideas cannot be accumulated. All the objections urged by Mr. Bradley against the Associationists are valid against all ideas alike, whether particular (were their particular ideas) or universal. They perish with the process of knowing, and they can never be called into existence again. Of course that process may be repeated. The individual may go through similar intellectual activities over and over again with like results; but neither the activities nor their results are identically the same. They have no permanence. The permanent identity is on the one side the thinking subject, and on the other the objects thought of. The subject grows, but not his knowledge as such. Every intellectual act modifies *him*. Every process is organised into him in the form of developed faculty. But the thoughts themselves pass away, as other good or bad actions do. They are accumulated only in the same sense as a learner of the piano accumulates technical skill. Each thought vanishes like each movement of the fingers on the keys; but no thought vanishes before the result of the activity from which it sprung has been organised into the agent by the development of his powers. In a word, there exists no world of ideas any more than there exists a world of actions.

All this seems to me so plain and elementary that I press it at such length with some sense of shame. But, on the other hand, the metaphorical use of such phrases as 'world

of knowledge' exercises such a tyrannical power in philosophy that very important results would follow the clear consciousness that they are metaphors—that the 'world of ideas,' whether regarded as in 'imperturbable repose' with Lotze, or as 'wandering adjectives' with Mr. Bradley, is a more or less solidly hypostasised abstraction, and nothing more. If this phantom world were swept off the boards altogether we should no longer need Epistemology in the sense of a theory of the nature and validity of the objective reference of ideas. It would then be clearly seen that what remains to be explained is the activity of knowing, the intellectual processes performed by individuals in virtue of an ontological relation between them and objects in the outer world. The task of philosophy would be to investigate the nature of this ontological relation, or of the "single principle" which makes possible the intelligent processes in individuals. Logic would no longer seem to be an analysis of the relations of ideas to one another, but an exposition of intellectual processes. It would not be a theory of abstract conceptions, but an ontological inquiry, just as the physical sciences are. And if it should turn out in the last resource that every process is best explicable as a process of thinking, then Logic would itself be Ontology, or Metaphysics, as Hegel conceived it.

For this is what Hegel meant. To him the Universe was not a system of thoughts, but a thinking reality manifesting itself most fully in man. He has been regarded as setting in motion an 'unearthly ballet of bloodless categories,' and then to have confounded these categories, these thought-determinations, these abstract ideas, with realities. He is accused of inventing a logical chain of mere thoughts, analogous to 'Plato's system of general notions or ideas,' and then to have endowed these thoughts with a dynamic power. He is thus guilty as Plato was of a 'crude mythology,' of substantiating mere ghosts, of taking a *mauvais pas* from the world of mere thoughts to a world of real things. "The distinctive feature of the Platonic theory of Ideas," we are told by Professor Seth, reading Plato backwards, "in which it is a type of a whole family of systems, Hegel's among the rest, I take to be its endeavour to construct existence or life out of pure form or abstract thought. Plato's whole account of sensible things is to name the general idea of which they are particular examples; Hegel's whole account of Nature is that it is a reflexion or realisation of the abstract categories of Logic." As against this view Professor Seth insists that knowledge is not reality, that the notion of Being is not existence, that the form or self-consciousness is neither man

nor God, but an abstract thought. "Hegel," he says, "has taken the notion or conception of self-consciousness, and he conceives the whole process of existence as the evolution and ultimately the full realisation of this notion. But it is evident," he adds, "that if we start thus with an abstract conception our results will remain abstract throughout." Most evident, I quite agree. To evolve things out of ideas is a manifestly hopeless endeavour. Out of thoughts can come nothing but thoughts. This matter is so evident as not to need discussion, or proof, or iteration. If Hegel and his followers, old and new, have attempted this task they are convicted, in my opinion, of manifest absurdity. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. From a world of ideas which has no existence, which is a mere manifestation of a subjective process of intelligence, nothing can be deduced. Abstractions cannot yield even abstractions.

The truth of the matter is, however, that the critics of Idealism have been reading into that system their own views. They believe in this world of ideas; they desire a science of it; they wish to relate it to a world of realities. For them the categories are general ideas connecting other ideas, universal thoughts like beams supporting an edifice of thoughts. For Hegelians and Neo-Hegelians there are no general ideas which do not perish in the making. There are no categories in this sense, no thoughts which bind other thoughts to one another. There is no world of knowledge in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Their universe is mind, not thoughts. Their categories are laws of the operations of intelligence, not connecting ideas. Their problem is to understand reality, to discover the nature of the fundamental principle of which all existences are revelations, not to constitute a theory of a world of abstract notions. That fundamental reality they pronounce to be the universal intelligence, whose operation they would fain detect in all things. They are as frank in their ontological intentions, as little troubled with Epistemology and the sphere of ideas, as if they were Materialists. The laws of thought are not for them the laws of thoughts, but the law of things. They do not wish to know the nature of knowledge, except in the sense of the process of knowing. Their attitude towards thought is that of science towards natural processes. Their explanation of thinking is as ontological as the physicist's explanation of gravitation. If their explanation is more full and true it is to that degree more intimately related to reality. If, as they hold, all reality is ultimately explicable as Spirit,

or Intelligence, their Ontology *must* be a Logic, and the laws of things *must* be laws of thinking. And this is just what Hegel tried to prove in his Logic, in which he advances from being to thought. I am not concerned at present in defending this interpretation of the universe as a thinking activity. It may be quite as absurd to regard physical energy as intelligent action, as it is to regard the intelligent activity of man as the operation of mere physical force. To say, for instance, that gravitation is implicit, or obscure thinking, may be to speak nonsense, as it probably is for the Materialist to say that conscious action is nothing but the intricate movement of physical particles. It may be impossible either to level up or to level down, to regard Matter as Spirit or Spirit as Matter. In any case there is no doubt, in my opinion, that Idealism is committed to the view of the world as Spiritual, and that the interpretation of God, man and the world as *thoughts* is as foreign to it as their interpretation into rings of smoke. 1
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If this is so then the arguments advanced by these epistemological critics against Idealism are simply beside the mark. If they are valid at all, which is very doubtful, they are valid against some fundamentally different system of philosophy. Indeed, the service of these critics to students of Hegel, in particular, is confined pretty much to the fact that they have unconsciously drawn attention to the point in which his theory differs essentially from previous systems. For I should say that the most significant advance made by Hegel consists, not so much in his reconciliation of knowledge and reality, as in his refusal to start—as previous philosophers did, and most of his critics still do—from their opposition. If we except Spinoza we may say that modern philosophy up to and including Kant has endeavoured to pass from the subject to the object, from thought to reality, or from reality to knowledge, from the object to the subject. Kant did more than any one else to show that the object implied the subject, and he pointed out also, though less clearly, that the subject implied the object. But subject and object, thought and reality, were never completely reconciled by him. The things-in-themselves became more and more shadowy in his hands, but they never disappeared; in other words, the fact that reality and thought are *essentially* related became ever more clear to him as he wrote, but this relation was not at any time so essential to him as to be *constitutive* of both the related terms. He always took his start from their opposition. He discovered again and again that each term had meaning *only* in re-

his ideas he detects the working of that reality. Apart from it he cannot even think falsely. His incomplete conceptions are as truly its manifestations, the results of its activity in him, as the growth of the grass, or the evolution of worlds, are its manifestations. He finds the Absolute, God, in the development of the thought of mankind, in the rise and fall of nations, in the establishment and overthrow of social institutions in the movements of history, just as truly as did the Hebrew prophets, or Carlyle. His task is to find God everywhere, to justify 'the faith'—if I may use this word of what was to him a rational necessity, and not a conviction unjustified by reason—that the Absolute Spirit lives and moves in all things. N. 12

This conception, no doubt, brings with it sufficient difficulties. It involves the Absolute in the fate of the finite, and raises in a new form fundamental questions that lie at the root of human life. It may be so conceived as to confuse the human and the divine, to blunt the edge of the opposition between right and wrong, and to make sin and goodness meaningless by undermining the freedom on which their possibility rests. But it is questionable whether any theory confronts these difficulties so fairly, or throws more light upon them. And in any case it is certain that to urge against Hegel or his followers that they are occupied in evolving abstract ideas from each other, that they have shut themselves up in a cloud-land of mere conceptions, and have committed the preposterous mistake of taking knowledge of reality for reality itself, their own passing ideas for things, and their systems and books for the Universe, is an accusation that comes home to roost. It is the critics of Idealism who find ideas interpose between them and reality, and who cannot escape from this shadow of themselves. They, and not the Hegelians or the Neo-Hegelians, find themselves shut up in a world of their own thoughts and are occupied in the hopeless puzzle of getting out of it. They want a theory of thoughts, of their validity and value, as if by thinking they could prove their validity; or as if the theory of thoughts were any nearer reality than the thoughts themselves. It is to me the supreme merit of Hegel that he has indicated a way of deliverance from this endless and hopeless puzzle of getting out of thoughts by means of thoughts. And he has done so by planting himself to begin with in the system of the real. Instead of regarding reality as circling round his ideas, as his critics do, he has brought about the Copernican change. His ideas are the working of reality in him; apart from that reality he is helpless, in so far as he is its

instrument, 'all things are his'. Consequently he has repudiated altogether 'the sphere of thoughts without a thinker,' swept away the world of ideas that divides the thinking intelligence from its objects, left man and the world, thinkers and 'things thought about' fairly confronting one another without any unsubstantial medium to separate them, and done his part to rid modern philosophy of the sickly element of subjectivity. He has, therefore, no Epistemology, and he needs none. His theory is a theory of the real, as Metaphysics was in the hands of Aristotle. In establishing that theory he deprived both thinkers and things of the false independence attributed to them by Individualism, but he did not reduce them into phantoms called thought-determinations, or abstract ideas, or logical categories, nor cut them loose from existence. They remain 'existential realities' for him, for they belong to the system of reality. And the system to which they belong, the Real which manifests *itself* in them is to him, as it was to Aristotle, Spiritual, an intelligence which knows itself in all things. To him there is no activity which, ultimately, is not the activity of Spirit. And, in consequence, the laws of its operations are laws of thinking—not the laws of thoughts. On this account his Metaphysic is also a Logic, a science, not of the connexions of ideas, but of the *operation of mind*. In a word, Hegel speaks of thinking, his critics speak of thoughts, converting his process of Reality into abstract and unreal general notions and his Ontology into an Epistemology.

How such a perversion of his meaning and of the meaning of his idealistic followers has come about, I shall try to show in another article.

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REALISM AND EPISTEMOLOGY. (II.)

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By Prof. H. JONES.

I HAVE tried to show that the critics of Hegel and his followers have taken his theory of thinking to be a theory of thoughts, and converted his process of reality into an unsubstantial system of abstract ideas. I have also tried to show that the systems of ideas whose nature, validity and relation to reality the Epistemologists investigate, do not really exist. What exists is a series of mental operations, activities of reality, as manifested in the subject who thinks and in the conditions, within him and without, which make his thinking possible. There are thinkers and things thought about; but there are no third entities. The mental processes performed by individuals do not leave behind them any products which can be regarded as having the apparent independence and real existence of things. The *only* result of mental activities is the modification of the mental faculty. Thinking develops the thinking powers, but it does not aggregate, either within the thinker or elsewhere, a heap, or mass, or series of ideas. Hence the phrases "world of ideas," "circle of ideas," "system of knowledge," indicate no actual fact. They are substantiated abstractions, as unreal as a world or circle or system of deeds severed from their agents. Ideas pass away never to be recalled, just as truly as actions or sensations pass away. They are serial phenomena, which can neither be associated nor dissociated, for they have no permanence and no universality. None of them serve to connect others, and they form no system, and consequently no theory of them is possible. We may have a science of the process of thinking; but a science of the products of thought, a theory of knowledge and of the nature and validity of ideas, is possible only at the expense of substantiating what is fleeting, and of treating abstractions as if they were realities.

Now, there is a sense in which every science (and even Metaphysics) deals with the fleeting as if it were permanent, and with abstractions as if they were real. We *must* tear up the unity of the real and deal with aspects only, for the simple reason that we cannot think all things at once. It may, therefore, seem that the charge made against Epistemology may be directed in like manner against all human

knowledge, which certainly never reflects the whole of being but is always incomplete. If 'ideas' severed from the subject who thinks them and from the objects which they mean are unreal, so also, it may be said, are the 'quantity' of the mathematician, the 'laws' and 'causes' of physics, and even the 'things' of common-sense. All these in their last resort are abstractions and myths. We may in fact say at once that all human thought is untrue and all its objects are unreal, for the former is incomplete and the latter are abstractions. But this is only a half truth. If all knowledge is false in so far as it is only a partial revelation of reality, all knowledge is true in so far as it is *nothing but* a partial revelation of reality. If every fact and event is in its isolation only an appearance, every appearance in its place within the system of reality is itself real. The condemnation of the incomplete and partial as false and unreal itself depends on the presence of the complete and real. Hence no science is altogether false and no abstraction is altogether nothing. In other words, while every science is untrue in so far as it is inadequate to the reality which it investigates, it still does investigate reality. But the unique characteristic of Epistemology is that it postpones the investigation of reality to another matter; it must pronounce upon the nature and validity of knowledge before it can be sure that we are not foreclosed into a thorough-going scepticism. It must investigate ideas in order to show first of all whether or not their whole meaning is not false, and their objective reference a mere illusion. So that the ideas with which it deals, while not altogether unreal, are set up over against reality. In so far as they have meaning, or are more than psychical events, they cannot be even appearances, for they can find no place in a system of reality whose very existence is matter of doubt. Epistemology, in a word, differs from every other form of knowledge in that it cuts itself entirely free of reality to begin with. It must not assume the reality of the objects to which the ideas refer, for this is the very problem it has to investigate. It has nothing to do with the reality of the ideas as psychical occurrences, for that is the business of Psychology. It thus abstracts from reality on both sides, and by dealing with the mere meaning of ideas seeks a place between Psychology and Metaphysics.

But this process of double abstraction from reality, this withdrawal into the world of mere meaning, destroys the very possibility of Epistemology. I shall try to show that it finds its problem by only *seeming* to retire from reality, and that in so far as it actually does retire from it, it

can find neither its problem nor its solution. In other words, I shall try to show that the whole edifice of Epistemology rests on a contradiction, on an attempt, that is, to treat its first starting-point and basis as both real and unreal. I do not deny the possibility of a theory of knowledge in every sense. I deny *this* theory of knowledge, because of the abstraction which is vital to it and at the same time fatal to it. In order that we may have a true theory of knowledge we must undo the abstraction on which Epistemology rests. We must restore the relation of ideas to reality on both sides. We must regard ideas in connexion both with their psychical occurrence and with the actuality of their objects. We must take ideas, not as independent entities or mere meanings, but as ~~manifestations of the activity of reality~~ *ideas*. We must, in a word, base our theory of knowledge on a theory of reality, and either regard it as a particular science dependent on Metaphysics, as a part of Psychology, or else, by pressing its hypotheses and categories home, identify it with Metaphysics.

The importance assumed by Epistemology in modern times demands that an attempt to cut its very root should be justified in detail. Epistemologists insist, not only against Idealism, but also against every other philosophy which professes to deal directly with reality, that before we can legitimately say one word as to its nature, or take one step towards constructing a Metaphysic, we must solve certain preliminary problems as to the nature and validity of knowledge. Prof. Seth puts the matter in this way: "Is there any reality beyond the conscious states themselves and their connexions? If there is, in what sense can we be said to know it? Is knowledge, inference, or belief the most appropriate word to use in the circumstances?" (*Phil. Rev.*, i. 136). "How, or in what sense, does the individual transcend his own individual existence and become aware of other men and things? It is this relatively simple and manifestly preliminary question that Epistemology has to take up. *Subjective* states are plainly our data; it is there we have our foot-hold, our *pied à terre*; but unless we can step beyond them, Metaphysics in any constructive sense can hardly make a beginning. Epistemology, if its results are negative, necessarily leads to a thorough-going scepticism; but if its results are positive, it only clears the way for metaphysical construction or hypothesis" (*Phil. Rev.*, i. 138). *Loeble human*

Two doctrines are set forth with admirable clearness in these words, namely—first, that the problem of Epistemology is to explain the transition we make, or seem to make, in

knowledge, from "conscious states" to a reality beyond; second, that this problem of the nature of the transition must be solved before we can attempt to determine whether there is reality and what is its nature. In order to solve its problem, Epistemology is furnished with "plain data". These are "subjective states," "in which it has its foot-hold, its *pied à terre*". But in this last statement I find a most serious difficulty. What meaning is attached to these "subjective states," on which as the one fragment of solid ground the epistemologist plants his foot? Following the lead of Prof. Seth and other epistemologists, I accept the distinction on which they insist as against Idealists, the distinction, that is, between a fact or event, and the knowledge or the idea of the fact. We are particularly warned by these writers not to confuse reality in any form with our thoughts concerning it. Lotze is most emphatic in his view that feelings can never be the ideas of them. And this applies in a similar way to all the phenomena of consciousness. The distinction between a psychical occurrence and the consciousness of that occurrence is as broad as the distinction between any other event or fact and the *idea* of the event or fact. The *idea* of the toothache, or of love or hatred, or of the perception of an object, or of a volition, is no more the actual toothache, or love, or hatred, or perception, or volition, than the idea of Arthur's Seat is the actual Arthur's Seat. It does not matter whether the fact be subjective or objective, it is never the idea of itself.

Of course this difference rests on the presumption made by Epistemologists that *ideas* of facts, psychical or otherwise, have sufficient substantiality to be opposed to the facts. Apart from this most questionable assumption no one can deny the distinction. I would myself insist upon it as a universal and necessary truth. To assert that a thought is the thing thought of, or that one psychical activity is another psychical activity, is tantamount to dissolving the continuity of being, and contradicts the first condition of thinking. Nothing can be anything but itself. The fact is the fact, the event the event, the thought the thought; and there is an end of the matter. No metaphysical theory can affect this fundamental truth. Even if it be true, as Idealists are supposed to say, that reality is thought, or thoughts; nevertheless, the thoughts of reality are not the thoughts which constitute reality; they are at the best *other* thoughts, and are either unreal or additions to the first reality. A complete idea of the Universe would not be the Universe; the idea would be the idea, and the Universe the Universe. And

the latter would have to be enlarged so as to take the former into it, or the former would have to be shown to be an unreal abstraction.

In the meantime, I accept, then, in the fullest way the distinction between thought and reality on which our critics insist. Let us now see its bearing on their doctrine. If the actual fact or event is never the knowledge of it, then our "subjective states" are not our knowledge of them. Both are facts, of course, and both are psychical facts; but they are different psychical facts; the one is the object known, the other is the knowledge of the object, both falling within Consciousness. Now, the question arises, which of these is the datum of the Epistemologist? In which does he find his 'foot-hold, his *pied à terre*'? Is it in the reality, or is it in the knowledge of it? Is it the subjective state as a psychical occurrence, or is it the reflective knowledge of that psychical state?

Let me put the difficulty in another way. The Epistemologist has a "chasm to bridge over," and that chasm separates the sphere of knowledge from the sphere of reality. "The chasm is not absolute," we are told, "else knowledge would be for ever impossible." Nevertheless "he" (the knowing individual) "does not pass over into the things, nor do the things pass over into him. At no point can the real world, as it were, force an entrance into the closed sphere of the ideal; nor does that sphere open at any point to receive into itself the smallest atom of the real world, *quâ* real, though it has room within itself *ideally* for the whole Universe of God" (*Phil. Rev.*, i. 515, 516). Granting, for the sake of argument, that both of these closed spheres exist, the question arises: Into which of these exclusive spheres do the "subjective states" fall? In which of them does the Epistemologist find his "foot-hold, his *pied à terre*"? Is it in the ideal sphere, or in the real sphere, or in both? There is, of course, a sense in which the "subjective state" is both real and ideal. I mean that an idea is ideal as (having) meaning, and real as being a psychical event. This truth has by no means escaped Prof. Seth. "Of course," he says, "if we take reality in the widest sense, our cognitive states are also part of reality. The wildest fancy that flits through the mind exists in its own way, fills out its own moment of time, and takes its individual place in the fact-continuum which constitutes the universe." But, as he tells us elsewhere, this existential side of the idea is of no interest to Epistemology. "It is only for the psychologist, however, that mental states are interesting on their own account, as

subjective realities or facts" (*Phil. Rev.*, i. 132). Epistemology deals only with their meanings, and 'conveniently neglects' their other side. As psychical events filling out their own moments of time they are 'parts of reality,' examples of what is called above "smallest atoms of the real world". But being real "they cannot force an entrance into the ideal sphere," and "the ideal sphere cannot open at any point to receive them into itself". They thus fall into two fragments, one of which is seized by Psychology and the other by Epistemology. Epistemology, being a system of ideas, cannot adopt them *quâ* real. (Psychology in some mysterious way can, although it, too, is a system of ideas.) As facts, or as real events, they are shut out of the ideal sphere. Seeing that, *quâ* real, they escape the clutch of Epistemology, Epistemology does in strictness not deal with *them* at all, but with ideas of them. But as the ideal is never real, as their spheres are entirely exclusive, how is Epistemology possible? If it starts from the subjective state as real, then the real and ideal are not separate. The Epistemologist actually knows *this* real thing. He has *this* reality in his hand immediately and directly; and the question which he asks, whether he can or can not know reality at all, is absurd. He assumes as his starting-point that he does know it, and the only reasonable question he can ask is, whether, knowing one reality, he can or can not know some other reality. If, on the other hand, the Epistemologist can not know facts but only ideas, if he starts not from the subjective state, or from the self, but from his idea of that state or self, then it may be asked, what kind of foot-hold or firm ground does he find in it? What special virtue lies in the idea of a subjective state more than in the idea of a stone, a stick, or griffin, that he should 'find in it his *pied à terre*'? The idea of the self is no more the self than the idea of the world is the world. Hence, if we refuse to play fast and loose with the reality of the subjective state, if we adopt and hold fast to the two exclusive spheres of the ideal and real, Epistemology seems to me to be in an inextricable dilemma. It cannot deal with the subjective state as real, for, *ex hypothesi*, it has first to pronounce on the possibility of knowing any reality, on the validity of the objective reference of any idea. And, on the other hand, it cannot deal with the subjective state as a mere idea; because if it begins with an idea it must end with ideas. There would be no outlet from the sphere of ideas, for surely it is preposterous to seek such an outlet by having more ideas. It has no foot-hold, its very dream of reality would vanish, and with it its own problem.

But, it may be urged, there is a third possibility. These subjective states may have the unique characteristic of being both real and ideal; or mind may have the power of knowing in this instance the actual reality itself; or, in this instance, at this point, the ideal and the real spheres interpenetrate. And this is what Prof. Seth means when he insists that the chasm between the ideal and the real, which 'nothing can bridge over,' is 'not absolute'. This is also implied in the use of the word 'datum'. "Subjective states," it is said, "are plainly our data"; and a datum manifestly means a reality that is also known, at least to some extent. A datum that is not real, and a datum that is not known, are obviously meaningless phrases.

Now I have no objection to the statement that "subjective states are plainly our data". I would add, however, that they are data only as psychical events 'filling their own moment of time, and taking their individual place in the fact-continuum which constitutes the universe'. They are data as 'parts of reality'. And I would add further that mountains and rivers, other men and other things, are data in precisely the same sense. If the real state of the subject and the idea of it, if the actual self and the knowledge of it, come together in the one case they come together in the other. Or, on the other hand, if the idea intervenes between us and mountains and rivers, the idea intervenes between us and the psychical states. If the actual Arthur's Seat eludes our grasp, so does the actual self. Idea and existence, thought and thing, are similarly related in all cases. If Reality sunders into two aspects, if it has both an ideal and existential side in one case, it has the same in all other cases. Reality, whatever it is, is consistent with itself; and if it has as its fundamental characteristic the function of appearing as idea in the case of subjective states, it has that characteristic always. If not, how would even the empty conception of any reality other than psychical states ever occur to us?

I do not expect, however, that Prof. Seth will admit this. Its admission is not consistent with his fixing on subjective states as in some special way giving us our foot-hold. So that the question at issue turns out to be this: Whether or not we know anything actual *besides* subjective states; or, in other words, whether Sensationalism be not, after all, the true philosophy. But I do not expect that Prof. Seth will admit this either; for it is inconsistent with his view that, besides an Epistemology which concerns itself primarily with subjective states, we may have a Metaphysical doctrine of reality in general which may be either Idealistic or

Materialistic. Moreover, he knows the history of Philosophy too well to be ignorant of the fact that Sensationalism leads to 'thorough-going scepticism'. There is some confusion here which we must try to disentangle.

We have set aside two alternatives for Epistemology—the alternatives, namely, of starting with a mere idea, or with a mere fact; we have, in other words, thrown overboard the absolute exclusiveness of the real and ideal spheres, and accepted 'the subjective state' as in both spheres at once, that is, as a 'datum,' or reality known. Now the problem arises, how can Epistemology, starting as it does with reality in one particular form, ask its primary question? Epistemology is defined by Prof. Seth as "an investigation of knowledge as knowledge, or, in other words, of the relation of knowledge to reality, of the validity of knowledge. This, at least, is the fundamental question to which other Epistemological discussions are subsidiary" (*Phil. Rev.*, i. 130). "Our cognitive states appear to refer themselves to a reality which we know by their means. Epistemology does not, like psychology, rest in the appearance. It seeks to determine whether the appearance is true, and, if true, in what sense precisely it is to be understood" (*Phil. Rev.*, i. 136). Will the reader compare this statement of the problem of Epistemology with the one quoted above? "Is there any reality beyond the conscious states themselves? How, or in what sense, does the individual knower transcend his own individual existence and become aware of other men and things? &c." If he does compare these statements of the problem of Epistemology, I think it will become evident that Prof. Seth confuses two distinct questions, and that his Epistemology rests on that confusion. The first of these questions is, Can we pass from knowledge to reality? Or can we know *any* reality? The second of these questions is, Can we pass from subjective states as known realities to other realities, persons, or things? Can we know any reality *besides* subjective states? The first problem is concerned with the possibility of the transition from knowledge, *excluding all reality*, to reality; the second with the possibility of the transition from the knowledge which *includes* one species of actual facts to a knowledge of other facts. We may put the distinction less accurately but none the less fairly by saying that the transition in the one case is from ideas to reality, in the other case from reality to reality.

I think it is not necessary for me to insist that there is a fundamental difference between these problems, and that it

should be made clear which of them is the real problem of Epistemology. Does Epistemology start within the ideal sphere and then try to get out of it to reality? Or does it start with a fact and, like every other science, investigate the relation of its assumed fact to other facts? If it does the first, then I need not repeat what I have already urged, that it can never reach reality, nor even ask whether there is reality or not. It is shut up in the ideal sphere. If it does the second, then it does not "inquire into the nature of knowledge as knowledge, of the relation of knowledge to reality," but into the nature of reality, and of the relation of reality to reality. H.B.

The first question is unanswerable. We cannot get out of the circle of mere ideas, because we are never in it; and we cannot get into the sphere of reality, because we are never out of it. And the assumption of a 'datum,' which is manifestly indispensable, shows that Epistemology itself proceeds from a reality and not from a mere idea. The second question is answerable; but it is not the question of Epistemology. It is the question of the relation of a part of reality to reality in general, a question which is asked by every science, and which definitely assumes that reality is knowable, and, so far, actually known.

But Prof. Seth cannot afford to distinguish these questions, nor can Epistemology. It *must assume* reality in some form in order to have a foot-hold. This is done in the second question, where the actuality of the subjective state is taken for granted. On the other hand, if Epistemology is to make a preliminary inquiry into the validity of the objective reference of knowledge it *must not assume* reality; and hence the first question is asked. Epistemology thus rests on a self-contradictory basis: it both must and must not assume reality. And we find in this very necessity an explanation of the extraordinary statements made by Prof. Seth, and quoted in my last article, that 'the chasm between knowledge and reality is not absolute,' and yet 'that nothing can serve to bridge it over'. The radical unreasonableness of the science is concealed by these ambiguous ways of stating its problem. my

That it is based on a contradiction which is hidden beneath a confusion may be shown in another way. This confusion lies in the phrase "subjective states". States may be 'subjective' in two senses. First, a state may be subjective in the sense of being a portion of the experience of an individual subject. Feelings and volitions as well as cognitive activities are subjective in this sense.

Mine are mine, and yours are yours. Secondly, a state may be 'subjective' in a sense which is applicable to ideas only, and not to feelings or volitions. Subjective ideas are those whose objective reference is not valid. In a word, they are untrue ideas, or illusions. We may, and continually do, inquire into the validity of a subjective state in this second sense; that is, we investigate the truth of a part of our knowledge by reference to our view of reality as a whole; we test a part of our experience by reference to the conditions of the possibility of any experience, or, in other words, by reference to its fundamental principles. But subjective states in the first sense are neither true nor untrue; for they are *ex hypothesi* parts of the life of the individual; they are assumed to be facts.

Now Prof. Seth uses either of these senses at his convenience, and he saves his Epistemology only by doing so. At one moment 'the subjective state' is a real experience, a part of the world of reality in which he finds his foot-hold. At the next moment 'the subjective state' is an idea whose objective reference may, or may not, be valid. It is a part of the ideal world. And it is only this ambiguity which gives 'the subjective state' its value for Epistemological theory. It makes it possible to start from reality while seeming to leave the question of the possibility of knowing reality untouched; for the subjective state is either ideal or real as we please. In fact, the unconscious movement of the Epistemologist may be justly described as follows. He first starts from the subjective state or idea, as a fact of experience; then he slips the existential side of the idea up his sleeve and treats it *merely* as having meaning; then he looks up and asks, where can we find the reality which corresponds to this meaning? It seems to me that we can justly demand greater explicitness on this fundamental matter of the problem which Epistemology seeks to solve. Which is its problem? Is it whether we can know any reality whatsoever, and, if so, how? Or is it whether we can know any reality besides subjective states, and, if so, how? Epistemology starts from the subjective state as real, or it does not. If it does *not*, then it starts *ex vacuo*, and although it is not dumb, it has nothing to say. It is shut up absolutely and irretrievably in a circle of ideas and has at no point any foot-hold or contact with reality. On the other hand, if it *does* start from a real fact as known, then it has assumed not only the possibility but the actuality of a positive relation between the real and the ideal. It is confessedly unable to get behind reality in order to set forth on its specific inquiry, and has assumed a datum. Its

problem is, therefore, no longer that of the validity of knowledge, but that of the relation of one fact to another, and in this respect it is just like other special sciences. It sinks in fact into a part of Psychology, and, as such, it is dependent upon, instead of preliminary to, Ontology. Like Idealism, which it criticises, it bases the cognitive relation of thinker and things upon their Ontological relation, instead of *vice versâ*. It seeks to understand, and not to make, a connexion between the real and the ideal. It denies the chasm between the ideal and the real by treating the subjective state as both; and thus, instead of having two spheres mutually exclusive, it goes far towards showing that reality has two sides, the existential and the ideal, or, in other words, that the real reveals itself as ideal. N.B.

I conclude, then, that Epistemology, as an inquiry into the validity of knowledge in general, is an impossible science, and that it has seemed possible only because, under the guise of this inquiry, it really deals with quite another problem, namely, whether it is possible to know anything *besides* subjective states. This is not an Epistemological inquiry, but a Psychological one aspiring to be Metaphysical. Before examining this second inquiry, and in parting with Epistemology as the science of the validity of knowledge in general, I should like to say that there is an objection frequently urged against such a science which seems to be plain and unanswerable. It is that it is impossible by knowing to pronounce upon the validity of knowledge as a whole. We may test a part by reference to the whole or the principle of the whole, but we manifestly cannot test the whole by means of a part. I have not used this argument; Epistemologists have been appealed to so often from this side that I must conclude that they are deaf on it. The same argument might have been put in another way, namely, by simply asserting the incontrovertible fact that Reality is all-inclusive, and, as such, takes in even false ideas. But this also is admitted and ignored by Epistemologists. They manifestly carry reality with them as a criterion whereby to distinguish truth and error, and they use it in every judgment that they make. But this does not deter them in the least from asking where is reality, or whether it is or is not. These broad objections having failed, I had recourse to the more tedious process of analysing the claims of this pseudo-science, for which I offer this apology to the intelligent reader. Locke

It remains now to examine the second problem, which pretends to be Epistemological, but which I have asserted to be a

Psychological one aspiring to be Metaphysical—the problem, namely, whether we can know anything *besides* our own subjective states. This inquiry starts from reality as directly, if not as frankly, as Idealism itself; hence the choice offered us is not between an Epistemology and a Metaphysic, but between one Metaphysic and another. And I think, as already hinted, that the Metaphysic to which it leads is simply Sensationalism. This Sensationalism differs from that of Hume or Mill, only in that it has been sophisticated to the highest degree by its intercourse with Germany, and by its attempt, at least in Prof. Seth's hands, to attach itself both to German Idealism and to Scotch Realism of the rough and ready type of Reid. To prove this, I acknowledge, is a task I am loth to undertake. I am not sure whether it would be a service to philosophy to separate the elements of a theory which represents itself as a combination of Epistemological Realism with Ontological Idealism; which, in other words, as an Epistemology asserts that it deals with mere ideas, as a Realism asseverates that these ideas are true, as an Ontology proclaims that it deals with reality, and as an Idealism pronounces this reality to be either thought, or thoughts.

I shall content myself with examining its fundamental assumption—That we do know subjective states as *real facts*, that at first at least we know nothing else, and that what we require to discover is whether, and, if so, how we can know anything besides subjective states. The first characteristic of this theory I should like to point out is that it starts from a *particular* datum, regarded as indubitable—"Subjective states are plainly our data". In this respect it reminds us of Cartesianism, which also sought for something fixed and sure, however small, as a basis on which to erect its structure. It differs from it in putting a 'subjective state' in the place of the '*cogito ergo sum*,' and in regarding its subjective state as real as well as ideal.

Now the idea of basing a metaphysical theory on an indubitable datum is radically false, and involves a mechanical method of procedure and a mechanical view of both thought and reality. In other words, the assumption of such a datum implies that thought links its objects externally one to another, because in existence they are isolated and particular. And just because particulars alone exist and the connexions between them are thought-woven 'spider-webs,' cognition never can correspond to its object. It thus, as the history of Associationism has proved, leads directly through the discrepancy of knowledge and reality

to thorough-going scepticism. But modern logicians contend with considerable unanimity, and, it seems to me, with convincing cogency, that thought does not move from a fixed datum by external aggregation, but by differentiation from within and re-integration. It must of course have a datum; but its datum, so far from being fixed, only gradually reveals what it is in the progressive evolution of knowledge, and so far from being particular it is implicitly all-inclusive. Modern Metaphysics, in accordance with this logical theory, starts from a view of reality as a whole, and not from a fragment; and its task is to expound the inner articulation, the internal harmony of this whole, and not by any means, or in any way, to proceed from the knowledge of one thing to the knowledge of other things. So far as I can see, we are practically forced to choose between these two methods. Lotze and his followers, I need hardly say, mingle these methods as they mingle metaphysical doctrines. But if we recognise the opposition between them, it becomes obvious that we must either adopt Associationism with its external and contingent linking of fact to fact [beginning with a sure one, hopping on to others and assuring them through it, finding its universal both indispensable and untrue, obliged to have 'webs' and obliged to make them spider-films]—or if not we must regard the whole as given at first, and watch its process of inward development. And this second method, if it is consistently carried out, must refuse to characterise its datum except in terms of the revelation it makes of itself during the evolving process. Thus each of its successive characterisations is known to be only proximate, a mere starting-point for a better. It will find certainty, or rather will seek it, in the end and not in the beginning. It possesses no certain fact to begin with; but, on the contrary, it finds its particular fact guaranteed as fact only by reference to the whole system of reality within which the particular fact obtains a place, and in relation to which alone it is real.

The conception that 'certainty' is to be found only in a complete system, in a consistent view of the world as an organic whole, and not in erecting an edifice of knowledge on a fragmentary fixed datum by mechanical means, is due to Kant; and in it lies the living force which brought about the momentous revolution in modern philosophy. His attempt to discover the conditions of experience, the fundamental question of the Critique of Pure Reason, as indicated or expressed in 'How synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible,' signifies that he had, once for all, turned his back on the old method of philosophy which started from psychical

phenomena, from ideas or impressions, and then sought realities corresponding to them; and that, beginning with the conception of knowledge as a whole, or, in other words, of knowledge wherever it can be found, he sought to lay bare its constitutive principle. It is quite true that in his hands the problem assumed what may be called an Epistemological rather than an Ontological form, and that in giving us his theory of knowledge he refused to pronounce upon the nature of reality, or things-in-themselves. But it is also true, in his hands, that the things-in-themselves were gradually deprived of all their significance, that the reality which he considered to be opposed to knowledge became a *caput mortuum*, of no possible interest to any one. He left nothing to distinguish his theory of knowledge from a theory of reality except the thin disguise of the word 'phenomenon'. Thus, whether we accept the higher or the lower interpretation of Kant, it remains true that the revolution in philosophy which he brought about consisted in a fundamental change of method; it consisted in setting forth from experience as a whole (or as such) to investigate its internal conditions, instead of first dogmatically asserting the existence of a fragmentary reality, then linking the rest of reality to it by means of the external categories of mechanism.

Now the attempt which Prof. Seth makes to start from 'subjective states as plain data' is simply a reversion to the old associative method employed by Hume and his school; and it argues that whatever else has been learnt from Kant, the supreme lesson he taught has not been taken to heart. Is it not plain, even yet, that if we begin with 'subjective states' we must either expand these subjective states so as to make them all-inclusive, or else leap from them into something absolutely different? Is it not indisputable that we must conclude either that there is *nothing but* subjective states, or, if there is, that it is absolutely unknowable, and not only unknowable but unbelievable, because inconceivable? We cannot proceed from the part to the whole except by discovering the principle of the whole in the part; we cannot proceed from subjective states to 'other persons and things' except by finding in our subjective states the principle of 'the other persons and things'. In the mid-stream of Metaphysics we cannot swap horses. Knowledge cannot "leap," nor faith either, if it is 'according to knowledge'. On the other hand, if we do find the principle of the whole in our subjective states, then in dealing with them we are not dealing with 'plain data,' but with the whole of reality implicit in these data which has to be made plain by further knowledge. We are establishing an

Ontology and not an Epistemology. The datum has ceased to be a particular one. If it really were particular we could proceed from it to nothing else. We could not even know it, for thought is surely relative. I do not mean to deny that we know 'subjective states,' or that they are data; but we know them and they are data for further knowledge, because in knowing them we know all reality—in part. Every datum, owing to the organic nature of reality, has in it the principle of the whole and exists only as its manifestation. In this respect a 'subjective state' is as good as any other datum; but it is no better. And the use of the term 'subjective' for a datum of knowledge is worse than useless, for it brings with it misleading associations. That which is a datum, I insist once more, cannot *ex vi termini* be subjective in the sense employed by these writers. The subjective which is a datum for further knowledge is also objective; as a datum it contains in it the principle of the whole. We cannot, except by a process of abstraction and for such merely practical purposes as those of the special sciences, ignore its relation to the whole, tear it from its context, treat it as an isolated part. If we do so tear it, it will lose all its meaning; it will be nothing real, it will not have even the virtue of an interjection. Philosophy exists in order to correct the abstractions of ordinary thought and science. It is false to its peculiar mission if it neglects the reference in every datum to the whole of reality. For it matters not whether we start from the isolated subject or the isolated object; in isolating our datum we have mutilated and paralysed it. We cannot do without a datum, as our critics themselves urge; but every datum we can possibly assume is in its last resort a universal, and the distinction of subjective and objective, like every other, falls within it.

Idealism, in the Berkeleian sense, as a theory of the subjective in pursuit of the objective, is as false as Materialism which starts from a mere object and looks for a subject. And Epistemology, which is engaged with knowledge as distinguished from reality, and which, while pronouncing upon the nature of the former, postpones all questions as to the nature of the latter, is subjective Idealism in disguise. So far from being preliminary to Metaphysics, it is itself a Metaphysical theory and a false one. The 'subjective states' which it assumes are 'plain data,' and, being data, afford a 'foot-hold' from which without break or leap we can proceed to further knowledge. Either Epistemology begins with these data as isolated particulars, and therefore *ends* with them; or else it begins with them as manifestations of a reality which, with all its apparent



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and even real differences, is fundamentally one and the same in them and in all other facts. In the latter case it is Metaphysics. It can *appear* to be something else, to be a science preliminary to Metaphysics, only because these subjective states which furnish the theory with its data are at once taken to be real and unreal. It seems to me plain that inasmuch as Reality (or, if the word is preferred, the Absolute) appears in every datum which we can assume, and inasmuch as we must assume a datum, seeing that thought cannot spin *in vacuo* on its own pivot, the search for a form of knowledge preliminary to Metaphysics is futile. No science can be preliminary to Metaphysics. In a strict sense there is no science of the form of knowledge besides Metaphysics; no theory of the not-real or the not-as-yet-real can be invented except by the suicide of reason, and even that would not invent it. All the special sciences are doing the work of Metaphysics, and doing it in an admirable way, even though, or even because, they attempt to justify neither their categories nor their hypotheses. They are in no sense its rivals; nor are they preliminary to it, except in the sense that partial knowledge is preliminary to completer knowledge. If Epistemology in its attempt to avoid being a Metaphysical theory likes to rank with them, and to deal with its data of 'subjective states' in their spirit, relating fact to fact in a consciously abstract way without aspiring to give a final account even of knowledge, I would have no objection to it. I would prefer to call it the Psychology of Cognition, and would be glad to know it more thoroughly, partly because in knowing it better I would *ipso facto* know more of reality as a whole. But a science which postpones *all* reality and proceeds without any datum except bare ideas, which is the first form of Epistemology we have examined, or a science which proceeds with a datum regarded as real and yet as excluding the principle of the whole, which is the second form of it we have examined, seems to me to be radically impossible. We live and move because the whole universe helps us to do so. We know *any* reality because, so far as we do know it, we know *all* reality. Neither in thought nor in action can we find a 'foot-hold,' a *pied à terre*, except in that which is related to the whole, because it is itself the manifestation of the whole. No preliminary science is either possible or necessary. Epistemologists, instead of standing shivering on the bank asking the futile question whether we can know or not, had better make the plunge. There is no way of learning to swim without going into the water. If they want really to think they must become Metaphysicians.